

FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)

Winterthur, Switzerland, 1 September 2020

CO-ORGANIZED BY FEDERAL OFFICE FOR AGRICULTURE, SWITZERLAND, AND LIFEFAIR

SUMMARY REPORT*

*The format of FSDs Summary Reports is under development. This report may be subject to change

Executive Summary

On 1 September 2020, a Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs) event took place in Winterthur, Switzerland co-organized by the Federal Office for Agriculture and Lifefair. This FSDs event was held in the context of the Swiss Green Economy Symposium 2020. About 60 people attended, reflecting a range of actors along the entire value chain in food systems, as well as representatives of relevant stakeholders from business, the public sector, civil society and academia.

Tables were asked to present one or more proposals for action to address a specific area of food systems, with a focus on Switzerland.

The discussion topics for dialogue at this event addressed the following areas: investments and infrastructure, production and supply chains, health for people and the planet, collaboration, innovation and digitalization. Each discussion topic is shown in the report below, followed by the proposal(s) which emerged in response to that topic. Discussion topics are phrased as ambitious 'ideal future states' of food systems.

The following is a summary of the tables' proposals for food systems transformation.

As is the norm at FSDs events, all proposals outlined in this Summary Report are not attributed to any particular individual or organization. Each proposal did not necessarily receive universal support from all participants at the event; rather, the aim of this report is to capture recommendations made at the event, in order to allow continuity and consensus - a 'red thread' - to emerge across all FSDs events.

Proposals

Discussion Topic 1:

Switzerland is an internationally recognized innovation hub to promote the transformation towards sustainable food systems.

Proposal 1: Promote an intelligent combination between market forces and political framework conditions

Wherever possible, entrepreneurship and market forces should be allowed to play their part.

Proposal 2: Involve all stakeholder groups

Proposal 3: Optimize transparency to enable better decisions

Make use of digitalization to ensure transparency, thereby promoting fact-based decision-making and rendering fraud more difficult.

Proposal 4: Standardize and simplify the structure, collection and storage of data should be standardized and simplified, in order to strengthen transparency

This should be done in a collaborative and a dialogical manner by relevant stakeholder groups (especially business and politics), based on the best science and making use of expert knowledge.

Proposal 5: Develop holistic (comprehensive) indicators that encompass all sustainability dimensions (i.e. the economic, environmental and social, in the sense of the SDGs).

Proposal 6: The government should support the industrial sectors in developing industry-specific standards / indicators.

Proposal 7: Promote education and research

Discussion Topic 2:

Transparency is ensured in the production and supply chains with regard to sustainability in all its dimensions.

Proposal 8: Develop common standards regarding the type and implementation of transparency

Agreement should be achieved through an inclusive negotiation process involving all relevant stakeholder groups. Means to achieve transparency should be both effective and affordable. This involves the use of modern technologies of digitalization, such as blockchain.

Discussion Topic 3:

The Swiss population has a balanced diet and that is within the planetary boundaries.

Proposal 9: Promote a process to create a common understanding of healthy nutrition and develop methods of measurement

This comprises methods of measurement that are also suitable for SMEs (i.e. easy to use and affordable).

Proposal 10: Include all stakeholder groups in the process to create a common understanding about healthy nutrition (not only experts).

Proposal 11: Ensure that changes in dietary patterns do not lead to malnutrition.

Proposal 12: Promote education on healthy nutrition.

Proposal 13: Review agricultural subsidies for their coherence with the goals of healthy nutrition and adjust them if necessary.

Proposal 14: Improve ways to inform consumers, e.g. via labels.

Proposal 15: Examine whether and how external costs can be internalized

Discussion Topic 4:

All relevant actors in the Swiss food system are connected internally and externally and contribute to finding collective solutions.

Proposal 16: Identify and involve relevant actors, including consumers and young people

This requires the development of criteria to identify relevant actors.

Proposal 17: Promote balanced dialogues that lead to the development of collective solutions, common strategies and visions as well as a common understanding of the system.

Proposal 18: Complement the dialogues with incentives and regulations / pressure, especially where voluntary measures do not take effect.

Proposal 19: Learn from smaller dialogues and expand them.

Proposal 20: Make sufficient funds available for such dialogues.

Proposal 21: Enhance collaboration between different federal offices (cross-ministerial collaboration).

Proposal 22: Frame the dialogues in an innovative and agile manner.

Proposal 23: Establish areas of experimentation for collaboration and make available the necessary resources.

Proposal 24: Conduct dialogues at all different levels (national, sub-national, local).

Conclusion

Despite the relatively short time frame in which this FSDs event was organized, it attracted more than 50 stakeholders from business, the public sector, civil society and academia. The atmosphere was very committed and marked by a spirit of openness. Bringing together the strengths of market-based competitive dynamics (economy), democracy-based regulation (public sector), innovation (academia) and critical questioning (civil society), allowed for the generation of a large number of proposals.

Central themes in those proposals included:

- Smart regulations and goals that mobilize market forces in the desired direction and that are broadly supported by the people
- Ensuring transparency and traceability (clear goals, reliable measurement methods)
- Holistic / integrated perspectives that combine the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability, addressing both the advantages and disadvantages of all measures and goals in a neutral, careful and dialogical manner
- Promoting innovation, industry standards, education and research
- Advancement of the dialogue at all levels and the creation of experimentation areas
- Provision of necessary funds